

Over \$41 million in funds awarded for major infrastructure projects in southwestern Illinois

Five projects on the St. Louis Regional Freightway’s Priority Projects List among those funded

Eight major infrastructure projects in Madison and St. Clair Counties in southwestern Illinois are receiving more than \$41 million in grant funding through the 2023 Illinois Competitive Freight Program. The initiative, which distributes federal infrastructure funds through the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), aims to improve the movement of freight and create jobs and economic opportunity while enhancing safety and local quality of life.

Successful proposals were ranked based on the plan’s goals: increasing safety, improving reliability, and boosting intermodal connections and commerce at the local level. A total of more than \$200 million is being invested in 22 projects on established freight routes statewide.

“These funds will be used for 22 port, rail, and highway projects in Illinois to address bottlenecks, increase mobility, and improve the supply chain up and down the state,” said Illinois Governor JB Pritzker when he announced the funding this spring.

Among the local projects funded are five on the St. Louis Freightway’s 2023 Priority Projects List. The List is compiled annually by the St. Louis Regional Freightway’s Freight Development Committee. Business and industry leaders work directly with local and state officials and the Illinois and Missouri Departments of Transportation to set infrastructure priorities by helping them to understand how infrastructure and efficiency impact on-time delivery and costs.

The ongoing regional effort to compile and build consensus for this List and advocate for funding for projects on it remains a key accomplishment of the organization and plays a vital role in helping to ensure various parties are familiar with the priorities before they see them on a grant application.

The five funded projects on the St. Louis Regional Freightway’s Priority Project List received



This is an aerial view of America’s Central Port, an integral part of the St. Louis Regional Freightway. (Courtesy Bi-State Development)

\$33,979,428, allocated as follows:

- \$15,197,718 to the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis for its multi-modal freight yard expansion at Madison Yard and rail improvements in St. Clair County
- \$10,000,000 for lane improvements on Interstate 55/70 in Madison County between Interstates 255 and 270.
- \$4,323,800 to the Kaskaskia Regional Port District for congestion reduction and safety engineering and construction.
- \$3,636,000 for dock improvements at America’s Central Port in Madison County.
- \$771,960 for engineering work on the Illinois Route 3 Diversion – Falling Springs Road and Route 3 Bypass in Sauget.

“The funding TRRA has received

will support the addition of a third main line at our Madison Yard, adding another 8,000 feet of track that will provide added capacity to accommodate greater velocity, so that freight trains moving through this area can move through faster,” said Brent Wood, president of the Terminal Railroad of St. Louis. “We appreciate the State of Illinois’ commitment to funding infrastructure projects of this nature that can help to reduce congestion and delays in one of the highest volume freight hubs in the nation and strengthen our rail network so it can handle increasing volumes in the years ahead.”

Three other local projects receiving funding, included:

- \$4,000,000 for reconstruction engi-

neering for Illinois Route 127 between I-64 and Illinois Route 15 in St. Clair County.

- \$2,100,000 for road improvements at America’s Central Port.
- \$1,600,000 for Illinois Route 203 pavement profile raise engineering in Madison County.

“The State of Illinois continues to be a great partner and certainly understands the value of freight transportation at all inland ports,” said Dennis Wilmsmeyer, executive director, America’s Central Port, which received funding for two projects. “We are pleased to work with the State of Illinois on rehabilitation of critical roads within our main industrial park that will allow trucks ease of access to and from the Port’s terminals and warehouses.”

Wilmsmeyer said the funding for the expansion of the Granite City Harbor General Cargo Dock will allow for an increase in capacity and movement of goods to and from barges. That project also will increase the laydown area, truck turning area, and provide a safer and more efficient surface for handling commodities.

“We are thankful that Governor Pritzker and IDOT are highlighting these projects which serve as economic catalysts for the St. Louis Metro East area and the State of Illinois,” said Mary Lamie, executive vice president of Multi Modal Enterprises for Bi-State Development and head of the St. Louis Regional Freightway enterprise. “These infrastructure enhancements will further elevate the region as a global logistics hub while supporting increased safety, reliability, and mobility.”

Ed Weilbacher, general manager of Kaskaskia Regional Port District, said, “This project not only reduces congestion and improves safety and efficiency but also builds the infrastructure to link to a new south dock that was just submitted to the Maritime Administration’s PIDP program. We greatly appreciate the State of Illinois in selecting our project for funding. It shows that the State of Illinois supports ports throughout the state..

The full list of 2023 Priority Projects, which includes more details about each of the 25 projects identified for investment, is available at <https://www.thefreightway.com/why-stl-region/priority-infrastructure-projects/>.

Amtrak

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Regarding any concerns for safety at and around the Alton area’s crossings, or at the Alton station itself, Goins noted, “The Alton station is one of the newer stations located between Alton and Chicago and has been designed to accommodate multiple modes of transportation with a key focus on higher speed rail. The 262-mile line between Alton and Chicago, which is owned by the UP [Union Pacific], was hardened several years ago to accommodate high speed trains.

“Last year Amtrak purchased new engines and rail cars to handle the increased speeds. In addition to improving the rail line itself, the 234 rail crossings between Alton and Chicago were also upgraded with the latest safety systems. We are confident that with these improvements, travel by rail between here and Chicago will be safe and efficient for the residents of our entire metro region,” Goins said further.

As for any increased noise for neighboring residents and businesses due to increased speeds, Goins noted that there haven’t been any complaints since the new Alton station became operational, and he doesn’t antici-



One Amtrak passenger rests on a bench at the Alton train station on an afternoon in late May, waiting to depart and head south along the high-speed rails. (Melissa Crockett Meske/Illinois Business Journal)

pate any with the increased speeds.

“Amtrak has been a longtime community partner in the Alton area. We are excited about the opportunities that high-speed rail can bring to our region,” Goins said. “Our station serves the entire metro Illinois north area, and many of the communities in north St. Louis and St. Charles counties in Missouri. We believe that the station and the area around it can serve as a catalyst for new development that will complement high speed rail travel and help further anchor the retail corridor along Homer Adams Parkway.”